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VOLUME XIX

SEPTEMBER, 1919

NUMBER 11

BULLETIN OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA



PHI BETA KAPPA ORATION

JUNE 18th, 1919

Present-Day Thoughts on the American Revolution

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Entered at the Post Office at Athens, Ga., as Second Class Matter, August 31, 1905,
under Act of Congress of July 16th, 1904. Issued Monthly by the University.

Serial No. 305

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PRESENT-DAY THOUGHTS ON THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

PHI BETA KAPPA ORATION

Professor Charles McLean Andrews, of Yale University.

In the dual role which has been assigned to me this morning of Phi Beta Kappa speaker and commencement orator, I have the very great honor of addressing you not only as citizens of this great republic, keenly alive to every event taking place in the world today, but also as a brotherhood of scholars, familiar with the value that scholarship has for the man of affairs and appreciative of the contributions which scholarship is making everywhere to the solution of the practical problems of the age. In the presence of the seeming chaos produced by this great human catastrophe of the World War, there arises an urgent call for such knowledge of the past as may enable us to control the riotous and disordered array of our thoughts and to balance the forces of pessimism and optimism that struggle within us for the mastery. Without the touchstone of history, the world may well seem to us a world in ruins, a seething human cauldron of revolution, civil war, and anarchy; for the foundation stones of society have been loosened, and for years to come there will exist unsettlement and change as the result of the fires that have burned through the crust of the existing order and are altering fundamentally the conditions of civilized life. So it has happened before in times of crisis in human affairs that the foundations of the world have trembled beneath the onward tread of those inexorable forces, to which in chronicled form we give the name of history.

To the historian the present situation represents, though on a scale more gigantic than ever before, the struggles of an intrinsically healthy and solvent human society to cure the diseases everywhere prevailing within its political and industrial systems. The physicians may not be now, as they have frequently not been in the past, men of superlative sagacity, experience, and wisdom, but their efforts mark a healthy functioning process, which in the end will bring to the human race new life and vigor, peace, order, and prosperity, where now confusion and disturbance reign supreme. These things must be. Through one great struggle after another man has staggered forward to an unknown goal, uncertain even of the path of his progress, trusting that the way of his going is guided by the destinies that lie deep-seated within him, the spiritual law of his being. With each generation the load becomes heavier, the problem of its burden more complex, as the area of mutual action and interaction among the nations widens and the submerged classes rise to prominence, overthrowing privilege and preferment, and compelling a recasting of political, social, and industrial relations in the interest of a greater number of self-conscious and awakened

men and women than have ever before demanded and exercised a part in the world's affairs.

To meet the new conditions, the leaders of the victorious nations are devising not only terms of peace but also new machinery, whereby reorganization and reconstruction can be effected and maintained. On one hand, they are perfecting a League of Nations, perhaps the most daring innovation in human political organization that the world has ever known. On the other, they are considering, as never before in the history of peace congresses, the welfare of peoples rather than the claims of governments, and are facing with sincerity and courage the incontestable fact that the future peace and prosperity of the world rests, not on the adjustment of boundaries or even on the recognition of new racial groups but on the establishment of high labor standards by means of international agreements and a better definition of the principles that must govern the relations of capitalists and the working classes in every state where social justice prevails.

With all its faults, and if we are to believe its critics they are many, the League of Nations represents a mighty forward movement, as far in advance of any understanding hitherto reached among the nations as are the ideas of the twentieth century in advance of those of the eighteenth. It is no agreement of kings or of royal plenipotentiaries; it is not the work of privileged class or caste; whatever its limitations, it is a manifestation of popular wills, expressed, in the majority of instances, through chosen representatives, and designed to further not only peace among the nations but the interests of those who make up the main body of their peoples. How it will operate no man can tell. It will face problems of terrible complexity; divided and antagonistic interests that seem to admit of no compromise; new issues that have for their settlement neither precedent nor example; and obstructions that will appear at times almost unsurmountable. These are the inevitable reactions that follow vast social disturbances, the growing pains of a dynamic society that is progressing, often in curiously blundering fashion, toward higher ideals of equity and justice. The deferred peace-time activities of four years, the rehabilitation of war-worn property, the need of credit for the resumption of business enterprise, the immediate requirements of distressed and stricken peoples—all these aggregate a total of work to be done, of wounds to be healed, of mouths to be fed, of industry to be reorganized, of patience and forbearance to be exercised never before equaled in the memory of man. There will be confusion, conflict, and perplexity before a normal condition is achieved; there will be much adjustment and much measuring up to greater responsibilities during this reconstructive process which is leading to new and better human relationships. Over and over again has history shown us changes apparently for the worse, which in reality were but manifestations of a transition to higher forms of social organization and methods of government. To the historian the future is to be trusted not dreaded, and he prefers to cultivate in himself what some good

priest said of his religion, "A great deal of faith tempered by a little doubt, not a great deal of doubt tempered by a little faith."

One feature of the war that is of conspicuous significance in its promise for the future is the drawing together of Great Britain and the United States in a new fellowship of understanding and esteem, due not merely to a sense of common danger and an association in arms, but even more to a sentiment born of oneness of language, institutions, and purpose. Whatever may have been the controversies in the past between the two great branches of the Anglo-Saxon race, both before and since the shock of revolution broke the ties of colonial relationship, the events of the World War have banished without likelihood of return the bitterness engendered thereby and have aroused to an extent never before known a feeling of respect, charity, and good will. The two nations have awakened to a consciousness of common kinship and common ideals and to a realization of the fact that despite differences of opinion, habit, and temperament—the inevitable consequences of environment and historical circumstances—they are fundamentally alike in their views of political liberty and their standards of social justice, for which each has in its own way struggled in the past. Great Britain and the United States stand as sponsors for a progressive and liberal civilization, not as unwilling allies but as two great powers actuated by principles and traditions derived from a common source and united to defend common ideals in life and government. Such mutual understanding, once entered upon with sincerity and conviction, cannot be broken, for it rests to an extent never realized before upon the belief that these two peoples working in harmony are trustees for the civilization not only of the Old World but also of the New.

Perhaps the most serious obstacle to a harmonious *rapprochement* between the two countries is in character not economic or commercial but sentimental. The competition of the United States in the field of industrialism has been very great and has exercised a direct and powerful influence on the business activities and methods of Great Britain herself, but it has never roused a feeling of antagonism and distrust between the two peoples, except here and there and temporarily. More deeply seated than any commercial jealousy or dislike is the time-honored antipathy due to the American interpretation of the facts of our early history. I know of no phenomenon in the realm of psychology, unless it be the state of the German mind or the attitude of the Irish toward the English at the present time, that is more extraordinary than this persistence of the idea that England has with malice aforethought selfishly and maliciously set out to conquer the world to her own advantage. Such an idea springs from a false reading of both English and American history and from the unworthy habit of imputing motives of self interest and desire for aggrandizement, where such motives have never existed. Had the British empire been built on a foundation of brute force, tyranny, and fraud the charge might be justified, but in fact the contrary is true, the empire has grown up, not

through conscious plan of kings and statesmen but through historical necessity, expressive of the instincts and strivings of a commercial and colonizing people. Sir John Seeley once said that the British had "conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind," but it would perhaps be truer to say that they had done so more or less unintentionally and in a sense unwillingly, shrinking from rather than seeking the burdens and responsibilities of empire, driven on by circumstances that no honorable people would wish to avoid. Far from me to say that the acts of individual Englishmen have always been above reproach or that the means employed have always been free from selfishness or disregard of the interests of others—for in fact, Great Britain must bear her full share of the world's sins and blunders,—but taken as a whole no one can deny that the development of the British constitution and the expansion of the British empire has served an enormously useful purpose in the social evolution of the human race. General Smuts has recently said that the British empire is the most important and fascinating problem in political and constitutional government that the world has ever seen: and one of the opponents of British rule in India, a native revolutionist, has lately borne witness to a change of heart in asserting that "English history, beginning with Magna Charta and ending with the law granting suffrage to women is the most complete record of 'freedom slowly broadening from precedent to precedent' in the annals of human evolution." "It has been well said," he adds, "that you cannot argue a man into slavery in the English language. You must live in England, learn from England, work with English men and English women, and study English and American history, if you are to catch a breath of that spirit which has made England free and great." To the historian there is nothing remarkable about these statements; they are chiefly significant as coming from former opponents of the British empire.

More important for our purpose here is it to examine the nature of the enmity arising from the incidents of our Revolutionary history and to discover why it is that the historian approaching the subject with an open and unbiased mind is often bewildered by the fictitious character of popular judgments. He finds widely prevalent in America a very curious attitude toward the events and personalities of the pre-Revolutionary and Revolutionary eras. He finds that these events and persons have become in a measure sacrosanct, the objects of an almost idolatrous veneration, hallowed in an atmosphere of piety and patriotism, and guarded from the intrusion of the truth-seeker by vigilant keepers—patriotic societies, local societies, race societies, and other self-appointed custodians, whose inclination is to raise the men of the past above the level of ordinary mortals and to treat the traditions of our past as if they were revelations of the Most High. These legends of the American Revolution have done much to keep alive among succeeding generations a spirit of unfriendliness for England that is unworthy of a great and intelligent people. Some of the statements contained in

the Declaration of Independence—a document written in the heat of excitement and with bitter intensity of feeling;—the strongly anti-British text-books, which have been wont to picture British king and ministry as possessed of cunning and malevolence, oppressors of the colonists and enemies of the human race; the teachings of Bancroft and his school, among whom we must count, unhappily, the latest popular historian of the Revolution, Sir George Trevelyan—all these elements have tended to perpetuate an unreal version of our relations with England both before and during the Revolution. A version of this kind once in print cannot easily be changed. So extreme often is the antagonism of political speakers and legislators, writers and patriotic societies, that one is at times forced to conclude that the average American cares little for the truth of his own history and that if what he reads sufficiently glorifies his country's past he will search no further. There is an old Latin saying that a people which wishes to be deceived will be deceived, and the American who is content with an interpretation that transforms incidents into miracles and leaders into demigods naturally is bound to resent the effort of the historian to treat either events or individuals as human. To many an American the Revolution has become, as Mr. Sidney Fisher has wittily said, not a revolution but a social function, in which all scholarly, refined, and conservative persons might unhesitatingly have taken part.

But the healthy instinct of future generations will not be content with such a vapid interpretation of our past; it will demand the truth, no matter how little flattering it may prove to be; and the day will come—in fact it is not far distant—when our history will be studied for its own sake and when the events of our Revolution will no longer be used to glorify ancestors, to justify racial claims to prominence in our struggle for independence, or, what is worse than all else, to increase the animosity toward Great Britain on the basis of events occurring a century and a half ago. Many of the current interpretations of our Revolutionary history are merely forms of propaganda designed for party advantage or founded on mistaken ideas of patriotic duty. And when all these are swept away and the events of these momentous years are studied for the truth that is in them then only will the profession of historian have come into its own in America.

We have gone about the study of the Revolution in the wrong way. We have made too much of the persons concerned, taking them out of their setting, and clothing them with attributes which are often the products of our own imagination. We have pictured our ancestors as we have wished them to be and not as they were. We have made no adequate attempt to comprehend the deep-seated contrasts between the two countries and the different ways of thinking and feeling that made it almost impossible for each to understand the other. Single individuals, no matter how important, do not create and stop revolutions at will, however much they may lead and direct them. Such persons are themselves subject to the conditions that surround them and to the environment in which they

are placed. Connected with every revolution are two great and powerful influences, the conservative and the radical, each with its habits, impulses, and convictions and each must be studied with equal thoroughness, care, and sympathy. Yet how many of the writers, who have so glibly condemned England for tyranny, craft, and selfish ambitions, have any real knowledge of the spirit which governed her at the time of our Revolution or of the irreconcilable differences that existed between the point of view of an English conservative and that of a colonial radical. Is it fair to draw conclusions when we know only half of the story or when we have no sufficient appreciation of the real issues at stake? Most of our children learn their history through the medium of biography and to them George III was a monster of wickedness, responsible for the Revolution and the loss to Great Britain of her colonies. What a trivial explanation of a cosmic event! I believe that it would be possible to teach the truth even to the children, if only we had the right kind of text-books and the right kind of teachers who themselves understand the issues involved.

What were these issues? Briefly stated they were as follows: For a hundred years before the Revolution, the colonies and the mother country had been moving in exactly opposite directions, the former toward intensive self-government, the latter toward empire. The colonists were absorbed in themselves, thinking only of their rights as individuals and their privileges as members of self-governing communities. They were paying no attention to the world of affairs outside of themselves or to the interests of the mother country across the seas. On the other hand Great Britain was moving toward enlargement and expansion; her ministries, with vast accessions of territory unexpectedly thrust upon them, were endeavoring often in bewilderment and unconcealed dismay to unify and centralize the many varied and far-flung dependencies of the British crown. Distracted by the problems and responsibilities of empire, they were paying very little attention to affairs at home and were neglecting the domestic needs of the English people. Among these problems none was greater than this: could they reconcile the divergent and antagonistic tendencies of colonies and mother country and adjust the colonial demand for greater freedom and self-control to the equally imperative need of preserving the integrity of the empire; or were the differences to go on widening and deepening until all hope of reconciliation was past and war only could decide the issue? We know the answer, for the War of the American Revolution shows the failure of the British policy, and shows further that the statesmen of the eighteenth century—British and colonial alike—were unable to find at that time a solution of the colonial problem, whereby the American colonies—the first of Britain's great self-governing dominions—could be retained as part of the British empire. It shows that British leaders had no vision of an imperial union based on equality and liberty and held together by ties of sentiment and affection. They did not realize that there was something radically wrong in their management of

colonial affairs and that to apply coercion to a proud and self-willed people was at best a crude and irremediable blunder.

Yet even so, the failure to solve the colonial problem, as it is being solved today, does not explain why reconciliation was not effected and why some working form of adjustment was not arrived at. There can be no doubt that at first a majority of the colonists did not want revolution. They looked on the connection with England as necessary and beneficial and preferred to maintain it as long as it was possible to do so. They would have been content with moderate concessions and had such been made it seems more than likely that the conservative majority in America would have been able to prevent the radical minority from going to extremes and committing the country to war. Over and over again in studying the period from 1764 to 1774, we are driven to believe that a little more yielding, a little more of the spirit of friendship and compromise on both sides, would have calmed the troubled waters and stilled the storm that was brewing. Why a dispute about trade, which could have been ended with satisfaction to both parties, and a dispute about taxation, which in its chief features was quieted by the repeal of the acts that provoked it, should have developed into an angry rupture, accompanied by defiance and coercion and followed by war, is one of the questions that cannot be answered except by a study of conditions that do not lie observable on the surface.

England at this time was an old and settled country, with the traditions behind her of more than a thousand years. She had passed through a long period of unrest, ending in the so-called "glorious" Revolution of 1688—a revolution which brought neither glory nor political advantage to the majority of the English people—and had emerged into the placid calm of the eighteenth century, during which those in power firmly believed that in all essential particulars their system of government was the best in the world and needed no important change or improvement. The era was marked by good feeling, except for the petty bickering of political factions, and by complacent satisfaction among those who held in their hands the reins of government. These men were middle class in origin and interest and they alone controlled the voting and could sit in parliament. Heavy disabilities and penalties lay upon Roman Catholics, Unitarians, and Jews, and even Dissenters were barred from the borough offices. The nobility, who as a rule had a middle class background, were in accord with the mercantile element in their eagerness for trade and speculation, and in conjunction with the monied gentry, the merchants, and the lawyers, constituted the privileged part of the nation—the rulers as contrasted with the ruled. This privileged class, composing but a very small part of the people of the United Kingdom, exercised political power, monopolized the offices of state, dominated parliament, and directly or indirectly determined the policies of ministries and shaped legislation. Their supremacy was unchallenged, for the lower classes were powerless to oppose them. Their activities were regulated by the only standard which they understood—the standard of money.

Brains and birth counted for little, except as middle class adjuncts, and honesty, responsibility, and devotion to duty were qualities more honored in the breach than in the observance. Bribery in elections, speculation and fraud in administrations, avarice in family relations, and a general scramble for personal profit made the era one of sordid ambitions and unjust distribution of wealth. England at the time of our Revolution was a middle class hunting ground, in which civil and military offices were deemed legitimate prey for the spoiler.

Executive control was in the hands of a whig and tory oligarchy, and parliament, where the middle class reigned supreme, was a kind of close corporation, screened from the outside world and secret in its proceedings. To publish debates or division lists was not only a high indignity but also a notorious breach of privilege. The members, safe from publicity, were lax in attendance and dilatory in legislation and were concerned more with the laws relating to middle class interests than with such as provided for reform or laid down any great principles of government or administration. The middle class mind was not progressive. It was embedded in tradition and dominated by fixed ideas of political and social relations. The rights of property were more important than the claims of humanity and the idea of passing laws for the benefit and uplift of the lower classes—workmen, artisans, and agricultural and mining laborers, not yet awakened to class consciousness—was almost entirely absent from their thoughts. Christopher Gadsden's reference to "those latent though inherent rights of society, which no climate, no time, no constitution, no contract can ever destroy or diminish" would have seemed to the middle class Englishman of the eighteenth century a mere flight of fancy, having no meaning for an everyday world. He could not possibly have seen its application either to the restless and high-spirited colonists in America or to the unprivileged and moneyless classes in England.

The House of Commons, which originated the laws so obnoxious to the colonists, had become at this time the leading member of the law-making body, and its statutes were already supplanting the executive orders in council as instruments of government both in England and in the colonies. This advance to a position of leadership over the House of Lords developed in the commoners a sense of solidarity that had hardly existed before and awakened in them a consciousness of power and authority that rendered them extraordinarily sensitive to their rights and privileges, particularly after 1760. To "insult" crown and government, as did John Wilkes in the *North Briton*, or to question their competency to legislate for America, as did the colonists after 1765, were acts defiant of constituted authority deserving condemnation and punishment. Except in a few noteworthy cases, such as those of Pitt, Conway, Barré, Burke, and other sympathizers with America, members of the ministries and of parliament saw in colonial complaints no reflection upon their own conduct of government, no manifestation of discontent based on legitimate grievances. They were beginning

to believe that government by parliament, as it then existed, was part of the divine law.

The official middle class mind was obsessed with a veneration of the constitution, a passion for legality, and a deep-seated hostility to reform, especially in the crude and elementary franchise which made possible their domination of political and parliamentary office. More important for our purpose was their aversion to the very idea of the "liberty" which the colonists demanded and their unchanging conviction that a colony was of necessity a subordinate and contributory part of the British empire, and must continue to be so, as long as it remained a colony. Though there were many in England who thoroughly disliked the government's policy of taxation and coercion as applied to America and though there were a few, among whom was George Grenville himself, who saw that some day the colonies would probably become a separate kingdom, nevertheless it is doubtful if there were any—not even Burke or Pitt or others friendly to America—who thought it wise to change in any important particular the policy that rendered the colonies serviceable to England. Even Adam Smith viewed the colonial demand for economic freedom and legislative independence as impossible, and believed that colonies which recognized no obligations toward the mother country were worse than useless and that it were better to have no colonies at all than those that were unremunerative.

Such was England at the time of her trouble with the colonies: a land of two nations, one privileged and honored, divinely invested with the right to rule; the other unprivileged and ignored, equally appointed by the eternal law to be ruled. The colonists faced an old country, with a highly developed and complex social organization, in which manufactures, industry, trade, and commerce—marks of a socialized state—were more important than agriculture, and where rights based on history, law, and the possession of property were cultivated to the complete atrophy of those that were merely human. They faced a privileged ruling class, sensitive, exclusive, and inclined to arrogance, deeply concerned with mercantile interests and the maintenance of their own power, and caring but little for art, literature, and the finer spiritual aspects of life.

In contrast to this highly conventionalized society, with its stereotyped system of thought and government, the American colonies constituted an agricultural frontier with an environment that was favorable to the development of man as an individual rather than as a member of society. The New England towns, which in most instances were agricultural communities, and in which, outside of Boston, the population ran from a few hundreds to a thousand or two, tended to be radical in feeling. Dominated by the Congregational system of church organization and overcharged with the spirit of self-government, in that they gave to every voting inhabitant an opportunity of expressing his own opinion, they were environed with an atmosphere of individualism that was congenial to the growth of such doctrines as those of natural rights, in-

dependent of law, convention, and tradition, and hostile to all ideas based only on history, precedent, and man-made statute. "God and nature brought us into the world free men," said the Wallingford fathers, "and by solemn charter, compact, and agreement we came into the English constitution." Such a statement as this simply could not have been understood by a member of the British ministry or of parliament, or by a legal adviser of the crown, all of whom would have called it nonsense, as from a constitutional point of view it was.

This radical attitude of the colonists is admirably expressed in a Massachusetts statement of 1762: "The natural rights of the colonists, we humbly conceive to be the same with those of all other British subjects and indeed of all mankind. The principal of these rights is to be 'free from any superior power on earth and not to be under the will or legislative authority of man, but to have only the law of nature for his rule.' In general freedom of men under government is to have standing fundamental rules to live by, common to every one of that society and made by the legislative power erected in it; a liberty to follow my own will in all things where that rule prescribes not, and not to be subject to the inconstant, uncertain, unknown, arbitrary will of another man. This liberty is not only the right of Britons and British subjects, but the right of all men in society, and is so inherent that they can't give it up without becoming slaves, by which they forfeit even life itself. Civil society, great and small, is but the union of many, for the mutual preservation of life, liberty, and estate. These notions of liberty had the ancient Greeks and Romans, and the same idea had our ancestors in Britain, long before the discovery of America. Most of the transactions from the grant of Magna Charta to the Revolution [of 1688] may be considered as one combined struggle between prince and people, all tending to that happy establishment which Great Britain has since enjoyed and is every day increasing to perfection."

Except for the last statement, with which he could have heartily agreed, the average Englishman of the privileged class would have found these utterances not only unintelligible but positively dangerous, as much so as the statements of radicals, here and in Europe, seem to many in America today. If the Englishman could not understand the situation at home, where lived thousands of men suffering grievous wrongs, social and legal, and barred from nearly everything that made for life, liberty, and estate, how could he understand these voices from America, which expressed their grievances—the grievances of a self-conscious people—in language so remote from his comprehension and experience as to seem merely the mouthings of theorists and radicals.

Yet it is not surprising that he did not understand them, for though colonial grievances were real, the arguments based upon them were often purely intellectual, drawn from the writings of Hobbes and Hooker, Selden, Sidney, and Locke, among which those of Hobbes and Sidney had the greatest influence in America. In

many of their resolutions and petitions the colonists pictured society as a political Utopia, unlike anything that ever had been, and far, very far, from "that happy establishment" which Englishmen at home were at that time "enjoying." They apparently had no real knowledge of the small measure of "liberty" accorded to the majority of Englishmen of that day or the still smaller measure accorded to the common man in past ages. The more intellectual among them did honestly believe in the contractual origin of the state, in the sacred and inviolable rights of Englishmen, and in the original and inherent rights of all mankind, and that belief, whether fanciful or not, must be reckoned with as among the causes of the Revolution. But middle class Englishmen, who had no difficulty in understanding grievances about trade and grievances about taxation—for both were tangible and concerned what they knew best, money—could make little out of these constitutional claims of the colonists or of this talk of the law of nature and of nations, of reason, and of God. Such claims and such talk seemed only to threaten that "beautiful form of civil government" from which they derived their influence and under the protection of which they were secured in their offices and possessions. They deemed these claims seditious, because if recognized they would undermine the foundations of the existing political order, and anything, whether in England or America, that endangered the integrity of the British constitution, as established by the "glorious" Revolution, was rank radicalism. Against this immutable dictum of the ruling classes the unprivileged masses of England herself hurled themselves in vain for many a long year; but their fellow radicals in America, further advanced as they were in political education and themselves participators in their own governments three thousand miles away, were in no mood to accept as final such an unyielding attitude of conservatism and privilege and they won their independence in a single act of revolt.

The final rupture came because the British authorities had but one remedy for radicalism, whether in England or in America, and that remedy was coercion. The age was not one of compromise or conciliation. However much Burke may have pleaded for greater civil and political liberty for America and Pitt may have wished to substitute a policy of friendliness and affection for one of brute force, the mind of the majority in parliament was not favorable to concession. The middle class Britisher in office viewed restlessness and disorder, not as a manifestation of genuine discontent that ought to be relieved, but as an evidence of sinful depravity and congenital ingratitude toward the best of kings and the wisest of ministries that ought to be punished as a child was wont to be punished for wrong-doing. Uprisings were to be suppressed by force, outrages to be visited with fine and imprisonment, offenses against those in authority to be dealt with as acts of sedition, public meetings to be forbidden as menaces to peace and order, and radical speakers and writers to be treated as demagogues and malcontents. Disobedience was contumacy, opposition defiance, and criticism

libel, "wickedly, scandalously, maliciously, and seditiously uttered or printed to the defamation of his majesty's government." This was the spirit of the eighteenth century government in England and it continued to influence men in authority there for twenty years after that century had closed.

Such an obstinate adherence to the divine right of constituted authority was met on the other side by charges of oppression and tyranny, which in the colonies were expressed in terms of extreme bitterness and reproach. The radical leaders in America would tolerate no "doctrine of passive obedience or any other doctrine tending to quiet the minds of the people in a tame submission to unjust legislation or control." Should Great Britain succeed in her policy then would they and their posterity "be enslaved deep as any Spaniard or African;" with liberty expiring they would become "veritable Israelites in bondage, deprived of happiness and even of life itself." Everywhere there sprang up radical organizations with appropriate symbols—Sons and Daughters of Liberty, with their Liberty Trees and Ensigns of Liberty—whose duty it was to resist to the utmost the "inexorable enemies of American freedom." Many of the Sons of Liberty, dissatisfied with words, resorted to deeds of violence and not only defied the laws of parliament but, believing that their own colonial governments had failed them and were impotent to meet the necessities of a critical situation, derided also the authority of their own officials and the laws of their own assemblies. These muscular radicals, like their fellows in every revolutionary movement, construing the "law of nature" as a "law of license," gave themselves free rein, inflicting injuries, destroying property, and even threatening the lives of those who resisted or opposed them. If to the colonists the British government seemed tyrannous, we may not wonder that to the middle class Englishman the colonists seemed perversely stubborn and addicted to opinions and practices that were subversive of the most fundamental tenets of their political faith.

Thus the American Revolution, like nearly all revolutions in history, was an uprising not against a king and his ministers but against a system and a state of mind. The system was not the work of George III, Grenville, Hillsborough, Townshend, or Lord North; it was the result of the Revolution of 1688, which gave power into the hands of the monied middle class of England, under whose rule had been fashioned those rigid and sinister ideas of power and government, which permeated the whole official world of king, ministries, parliament, council, departments, and boards that had to do with administration at home and abroad. If we are to throw the responsibility for the revolution upon any single body of men, let it rest upon the shoulders of the lawyers—the legal advisers of crown and departments, who in their opinions, expressed in parliament, on the bench, and in written reports, adhered with the utmost strictness to the letter of the law and upheld through their advice the policy of no concession. We must say something of course of the obstinacy, prejudice, and personal government of George III, of the

stubbornness and duplicity of Hillsborough, and of the subserviency and good nature of Lord North; but more important than the personal influence of any of these was the refusal of the official and legal mind in England to depart in any essential particular from the rules and principles which governed the exercise of the prerogative, the management of trade and commerce, and the relation of the colonies to the empire during the years since 1689. Were I writing the Declaration of Independence today, I should indict first the privy councillors and departmental officials who had to do with colonial affairs, and then Lord Mansfield and others of the legal profession upon whose advice these officials frequently acted; and I should not forget to include in the presentment Sir William Blackstone himself, whose "Commentaries" published in 1768-1769 confirmed the middle class Englishman in his overweening conceit of power and flattered him by expressing entire content with the law and constitution of England as it then existed. Blackstone had been lecturing for a number of years and we are told that the king had seen a part of the "Commentaries" in manuscript. I doubt if I should indict George III as an individual. He is made responsible in our Declaration for many things with which he personally had nothing to do, and for more than a century and a quarter has been the scapegoat of the Revolution. In reality his personal conduct was but one of many factors in the case and by no means the most important among them. But I should indict the king as the embodiment of the royal prerogative, a power upheld by Blackstone and wielded rather by the king's councillors, secretaries, and executive departments than by himself, and one that was thoroughly disliked and resented by the colonists as interfering with their management of their own affairs. In revolting against the prerogative the colonists were opposing a legal principle rather than a man, but a principle that was maintained in England as a fundamental part of the British constitution. The Declaration of Independence, though directed against the king as a "tyrant" and as one "unfit to be the ruler of a free people" was in fact an indictment of the constitutional power of the prerogative; it was not, because it could not truthfully be, an indictment of a man, whether of German descent or otherwise.

What conclusions are we to draw from this brief historical analysis that will apply to the furtherance of that better understanding with Great Britain which the World War has done so much to promote? Mainly two. In the first place an animosity based on a reading of only one side of a controversy is manifestly unjust and irrational. Our writers have hitherto taken the view of the colonial radicals and have made no attempt to discover or to understand the thoughts and feelings of those who held conservative and moderate views in America or who upheld the British argument at home. It is one thing for the colonists, in the bitterness of their experiences and angered by the stupid blundering and offensive conduct of British officials, to raise the charge of oppression and tyranny against Great Britain and her ministers; but it is quite another thing for us who live nearly a century and a half after the

event and who have knowledge that our forefathers did not possess, to keep alive this bitterness and allow it to influence our attitude toward the British nation at the present time. Our ancestors fought not for democracy, in any modern sense of the term, but for the right to order their own affairs in their own way. They fought for political and commercial liberty and for freedom from dependence on the British crown and parliament, and as a people which had outgrown the swaddling clothes of colonial subordination they had their justification in fact, and, as they interpreted it, in theory also—the theory of the rights of man. Great Britain had on her side the law and the constitution, for the colonies were colonies and as such were subject to the immutable law of colonial relationship; and there were thousands in America who were satisfied with this relationship and saw in revolution only anarchy and disaster, endangering lives and threatening prosperity. Here are three points of view, and among those who held them were many honorable men who were equally convinced of the justness and equity of their positions. Yet who among our American writers has ever honestly made the attempt to analyze the thoughts and opinions of the American moderates before the Revolution or to understand the logic of those who argued against the American claims in the British parliament? He who would comprehend the Revolution in all its bearings must study it in the light of the conflicting ideas of the eighteenth century and must fathom the British mind of that period with as much impartiality and sympathy as he fathoms the minds of Franklin, Adams, and Washington. Until we know why the Loyalists in America and the British official, lawyer, and member of parliament in England thought as they did and acted as they did, we shall continue to present a picture that is not only provocative of wrath against England among those whose minds are easily prejudiced but one that is also distorted and untrue.

In the second place, the American Revolution was a great cosmic event in the world's history, much too big to admit of wrath over wrongs so long dead that it is high time they were buried and their ghosts laid beyond hope of resurrection. It has been well said that the problems of today are too great to permit us to give more than a passing thought to the quarrels of our great-grandfathers. Our Revolution is not our revolution only; it is a part of the history of liberty, of humanity, and of progress. It represents what Burke once uttered in his fine way: "The question with me is not whether you have a right to render your people miserable but whether it is not your interest to make them happy. It is not what a lawyer tells me I may do, but what humanity, reason, and justice tell me I ought to do." The mistake of the British government lay in its rigid adherence to the letter of the law and the constitution and its failure to realize that sympathy not coercion was a wise policy for governments as well as individuals. The strength of the American cause lay in the fact that the colonists discarded the law and the constitution and responded to the demand that lay within them for a liberty of action which they deemed necessary to their happiness

and prosperity as a people. Herein lies the eternal laws of progress, and herein lies the essential features of a struggle that will go on as long as the world abides—the struggle between those who have and those who have not that which they think they ought to have. The ultimate cause of the American Revolution was not a question of oppression versus slavery—for there was no intentional oppression on the part of Great Britain or threatened slavery on the side of America. It was a question of freedom from the selfish and uncompromising policy of a governing class; of freedom from the demands of a newly-made empire, which placed the wealth and power of the whole before the interest of any of its parts; of freedom from the operation of a body of law, which had not kept pace with the mental development and material needs of a colonial world, already in fact, if not in name, a group of semi-independent, self-governing political communities. There is no place in a struggle of this kind, which in the end was of enormous profit to Great Britain herself, for the perpetuation of brooding animosities.

But still more important is it for those who would use these old-time grievances to sharpen the edge of popular dislike of Great Britain to remember that England and the English of the present time are not the England and the English of 1776. The governing and voting element in the United Kingdom of 1919 are in overwhelming numbers the heirs not of the privileged classes of the eighteenth century, but of those unprivileged and neglected classes, which suffered greater social and economic wrongs at the hands of the same selfish and dominant middle class than ever did the inhabitants of colonial America. Surely there should be sympathy here not enmity, for both have fought the same fight against a privileged oligarchy. We too often forget that in the last hundred years, England has passed through a revolution in her political and social institutions more far-reaching and complete than has any other modern state, and has even outstripped us ourselves in the attainment of democracy and social liberty. Yet she has done this with so little outward demonstration as almost to deceive the careless observer into believing still in the permanence of British institutions. British institutions are less permanent than our own. There is hardly a single important feature of government, administration, and dispensing of justice, local and central, that has not undergone a reformation so drastic as to constitute a silent revolution of a profound and fundamental character.

In four great acts of electoral reform, Great Britain has enlarged her voting population from 400,000 to 16,000,000, and has admitted women not only to the local franchise but to parliamentary franchise as well. In the government of her municipalities, her counties, and her parishes, she has taken the control out of the hands of the oligarchic and aristocratic elements and placed it in the hands of the voting constituencies. She has entered upon her statute books laws touching sanitation, public health, factories, land monopoly, electoral corruption, old age pensions, national insurance, and the like that place her in the very forefront of the most progressive

countries in the world. She has destroyed the political advantages of privilege, caste, and wealth; she has democratized all of her governing bodies and made them everywhere representative of the voting population; she has recognized to a greater extent than we are willing to do the principle of state control of all matters of national welfare and is ready to go much farther as soon as reconstruction has begun.

Above all else she is now facing an experiment in political organization that is grander and more complex even than the one which the United States was called upon to face in the establishment of a federal republic. Out of the divers and scattered parts of a British empire she is about to create a British imperial commonwealth or a British commonwealth of nations, call it what you will, a union of five self-governing dominions, with India an integral part thereof, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland a senior partner in the enterprise. How it will be accomplished no man can yet say, but one thing is clear, the system, whatever it may be, will combine in a well-adjusted balance a highly developed sense of unity at the center with freedom and equality in all its parts, and be founded as a whole not on might, force, or compulsion, but on moral principles—principles of justice, equity, and equal opportunity for all. This transformation of the British empire into a congeries of autonomous nations, united under an hereditary kingship and a central imperial conference or cabinet, and bound together by ties of devotion to common ideals of liberty and by confidence in the spirit of fairness, honor, and friendliness governing all, is an event in the history of the world only less significant than the founding of the League of Nations itself.

When contrasted with these magnificent accomplishments of Great Britain in the field of democracy, just government, and imperial organization, of what value are the petty animosities based on a superficial reading of history, on divergencies of material interests, or, what is worse, on trivial dissimilarities in speech and manners, and, with many, on mere personal dislike of insularity, condescension, hyphenated names, and titles, all of which are but the frills and foibles of a great people? Neither the quarrels of the past nor the external dissimilarities of the present must be allowed to destroy the spiritual agreement of the two greatest democratic nations on earth, an agreement resting upon instincts and ideals of moral obligation and duty common to both people. In the last analysis the United States took part in the late war, not for Great Britain but with her, because she was defending the same forms of government and the same principles of justice as those in which we believed; and on both sides the men who fought and died were consciously or unconsciously the guardians of the same civilization. Both peoples love peace and will fight for it; both are committed to democracy, self-government, and the general welfare of mankind; both are possessed of loyalty, courage, and indomitable resolution when a goal is to be reached; and both must work together, as they have lately fought together, not in a spirit of mistrust or jealousy, but as brothers and comrades joined in a common service, the political and social good of all the world.

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